

# The MIDLAND

Vol. XIX

May-June 1932

No. 3

## BROOK BOUNDARY

By BENJAMIN APPEL

He had said, "I'll meet you where the brook curves under the old bridge," whispering in this afternoon of yellow and green, in this spring softness, itself a whisper. He set off in fishing boots, fly rod in hand, away from the water-entranced tourists who had gathered together like a band of pale frogs on the edges of the deep greeny hole the dam held captive from swiftness. All the countryside was the yellow of buttercup, of sun, of water glare and the reborn green of leaves and grass. His trystward path was through this heartache of color. And the path was water although she who would be waiting was not a brook nymph.

There was a peering crouching moment as he entered between the rusty strands of wire that divided the brook into a "this is mine" and a "that is yours." Who could say what silver bubbles belonged to upstream or to downstream? Yet, crawling through the barbed twistings was entrance into a new wildness. Mostly, people were faithful to the pool where they created a civilization of a sort with baskets of sandwiches and spread cloths. The brook region behind the wire belonged to the woods, and such creatures as plundering children, going wetways among the lovely elf green mosses and slippery rocks, and the creatures hunted, crayfish pinkly of water, hellgramites, lizards. But such folk as children and crayfish were scarcely civilized. This he thought, poised between the wires, seeing the brook all foam and madness as if gushing from his eyes, so low he was in stooping, flowing and flowing with its marble pattern changing darkly until the flux was one bright metal, hypnotic as a mirror, at which the would-be swimmers stared.

He was beyond. The woods huddled closer, were cool in their own shade. Sometimes a drooping branch clutched at the waters with spring leaves uncertain and lovely as baby fingers. He walked knee-high in the wet push, blundered on submerged rocks, and heart beating, invaded

deeps where the shivers mounted up and up his rubber boots until he desperately yanked them higher. Even while in sight of the picnickers he had begun to use his split bamboo with its dart and drag of flyline slithering under the branches, for no one had right beyond the wire unless it was a child or a fisherman. Children weren't grown-ups and fishermen might bring home a something fresh to fry and that was nice and useful. His tiny pearl spinner came spinning back to him so charm-like and artificial he wondered at its potency. Remarkable bait. It fooled the pickerel and the pool crowd.

In the forging of that brook, wet silver had been bent into a wide curve of obliteration. There was no pool now and no people. There was nothing but the interchanting of leaves and water. Looking backwards, he marveled at the curve and the high palisade of sunshine rising upon it, that was another gateway entered and become flame to those who would follow. Free he was to think of the girl who would meet him in the field by the bridge. The field was old as if it had been updug from an English county; perhaps Izaak had tramped it and thought of pike. But what of the spring girl in it, ruddy and young, reading, or, most likely, looking up the brook where he was to come in seven league boots, not very speedy but equally as magical as the legendary ones? He would come in spring disguise now that men could not run naked between the trees like pagans, and new leafy love must shelter behind a whippy bamboo and bit of pearl. She would be there, the ruddy darling of the hundred red tints. She had a throat of pink. Freckles that were spots of subtle rust. Red, red darling with hair of copper . . . he imagined it floating in the brook, all the long strands swimming in shoals of loveliness. . . . And her cheeks were the color of the palest roses; and most lovely of all were the reddish brown eyes wantoning when she stretched her

arms, for then the tiny hairs glinted like pirate gold.

He began to hurry but the rounded rocks and their aqueous forests of moss slid his feet from under him. Lurching, the sky seemed remade into leaves of blue vivid against green-ness. How near a ducking. His rod had speared upwards and he had the cursing labor of extricating the pearl hook from leaves real and stubborn. The hooks were like an anchor dropped into solidity. The tiny spinner shone, leered like a cyclop eye. The bamboo ached in a fearsome arc. The brook sidled and whispered and went right by him. This, he thought, is what comes of a lover's impatience. He became modest and flattering which is the way for a man to be when his hooks bite into bark.

The spinner fell clear. Broken leaf fragments came dancing down in a premature autumn. Well, he couldn't walk fast and he couldn't walk ashore where the land was one dense bush. Yes, yes, his one path was the silver one, and since the rod was temptation in his hand and the woods whispered of the finny wonders in each black hole opaquely bored in emptiness that was also swift water, he flicked the spinner wherever he suspected mystery. He was a magician and the spinner was his magic, capable of creating green shadows that were life of a fantastical sort where there had been no life before. With deep ghostly malice, pickerel torpedoed their hunger after the bait, struck, missed, were fables remembered by a brilliant flash of white belly.

The sun wooded the fisherman, ingratiating warmth into his primitive essences. The water mysteries mastered him, the brook road no longer seemed strange to his feet, his ears understood the stillness.

Deeper he went into that timeless hollow where time is a sleeping beauty and not a passage, a pearl nucleus immutable. The trees almost betrayed the nymphs within them. Slender and hesitant, they were like naked maidens reluctant to give of their beauty to the demons lurking in water. The new dimension was upon him and somewhere between the infinities of the pool and the old field, he existed lost and free as a brook bubble, and bubbles owe no allegiance to downstream or upstream. Was she in the field? Probably? The dusty road that led to it was not timeless; the minutes were used in estimating distance between two points.

The spinner returned to him behind the leash of enameled line, faithful as a hound to a whistle.

A pickerel darted as if it were a spear hurled by brook elf. A strike. Froth. Hoorah. At last a pickerel leaping, all fury and green glisten, sunshine on the sunless scales. In that heartbeat of capture, he felt lost in water, among the rapids and washed rock masses. The life enchanted by the spinner came squirming, in tangles of excitement, the tail beating from side to side like a pendulum gone insane. He lifted the rod, the tip circled, the pickerel was in flight, falling into the bushes. He pulled up on land and looked down on ferocity, snouted, cruel-jawed, armored in slime and wearing the colors of the afternoon yellow and green. He tugged the hook out. The spring spell almost lifted. This was but fish, butcher meat. How stealthy the silence. Why must water and land always be in feud—even here where the woods were lakes of leaves and the brook a road, if a slippery one?

He darted the pickerel back at the elves. Who wanted Jove's bolts when one could not see Jove? His hands were slimed. Wasn't he the swell lover, fooling around with fish while she waited? She was certainly there by now, her ruddiness like a spring cloud in the old field. Yet, yet, in God's name what was this pressing sweetness, this ache of the unrealized? What mirage hovered opalescent in these woods, in life, for that matter, that compelled him to grope with such circumscribed magics as a flyrod and spinner hook? He did not know. . . .

He was out of his body, seeing the fisherman from a catbird's curiosity. A tree in boots, manipulating a bamboo that was an extension of his arm, with a face drugged by the quiet of leaf and whirling of water, and the tree was splashing upstream. He thought he walked in a box even if a brook ran and all the world opposed geometry. There was a wonder without and some folk knew how to grasp myths. He fished. This was his way.

If he could not actually see the dryad horde, which was another name for wonder, he might at least catch pickerel that had. Who could doubt that the slender quick fish had seen? Perhaps, this was one of the privileges of the nature that had cast out Adam and his breed. Loss, oh God, bitter loss. Man had lost the holy sight, stood in a blind stare, eyeless within the seeing circle. He plunked his spinner into a likely hole. He must fish every submerged covert, every sunken cave. Why? Would fishing cleanse his soul sufficiently to see with a mountain or a squirrel? No; but he

must come to her strong from his attempt even if the dryads went from his fingers like the brook. How wet his hands but wetness at most was a subtle memory and could never be brook. So much for the clenching of visions not to be confined by wistful men.

There was the length of line tricking out like a clever incredibly thin serpent, the spinner homing towards him and attracting all the stray drowned gleams of sun to its pearly conquest, and there was another green shape shooting out of green nothingness. Elves dwelled therein; elves were never indiscreet after hooks. From under the halls of water the pickerel swam. The trees were grotesque in the rare corners of sight he could spare away from the finned pursuer. A missed strike, a turning tail, and gliding and gliding a disintegration into caverns unmeasured by man. He was not altogether human. Hadn't he sneaked past the rusty wires?

The road he travelled might have fascinated a simpler Marco Polo. A nameless flower; the muddy stretch where hoofs had dug wells, a few cows gaping at him not like cows in a field but as if he had surprised ladies at bath. Preceding him the bamboo was an emissary. Here in a solitude where ferns clambered, he mounted up to an Atlantis trunk that withheld the brook's passage and his own. In a narrow trough, underneath, haunting the falling bubbles and splatters of lost water, in the white sound and sight he saw a monster trout of granite. He could not lure him onto his hook. What a worthy gift speckles would have been for the one who waited. Sometimes black fishy shapes leaped ahead of him like frightened heralds announcing the terrible coming of a creature whose legs were leaning towers of Pisa, supporting a bulk incredible.

Around a curve a big soup plate turtle sat on a rock, contemplating the next curve's turning. What had the thing seen go down the wrong curve end? The fisherman was Buddha-silent as the turtle. The reptilian neck jutted from the ponderous yellowish shell; little eyes looked down the wrong end of the curve. It wasn't staring at the red darling? "Boo!" he yelled. "Get going." He waved his rod, shouted, threw a brown wet rock that fell with a mighty splash. The turtle's dry shell was spattered but still it didn't move, too entranced with the wrong end of the curve even when a second rock flung another rain. For the first time queerness twisted the man's thoughts. Perhaps he wasn't standing rubber-booted in the

brook en route to amour? Now, what the devil, what the splashing devil. . . . Consider the crazy wonder of Me not existing, not towering in mid-stream, bellowing, chucking stones?

He had a tiny fear of the turtle that did not acknowledge his manship, advancing upon it, full of a funny emotion of not knowing what he intended to do. Thank heaven, the turtle suddenly proved the man's actuality, lumbering off the rock. The gratified fisher marched toughly. The yellow plate was at his feet, and yet another plate. He poked them with the butt of his rod. They vanished, retreating into nothingness like the pickerel. No more yellow plates, although a moment ago he had seen the brightish roundnesses. I better be moving along, he decided, or something'll enchant me; she'll wait forever and forever in the old field and ten hundred years later a myth maker will tell of the fisher who never attained his lady's side. She must be sore, maybe, had cursed in a sad way?

The head of a woodchuck or a raccoon was a furry point observing him from the shore. Gone; the tracks, neat on the sand, were hieroglyphics of a meaning he had not been able to grasp all day. He inundated the claw marks. Gone; a leaf floated, the brook whispered.

Out of the timeless fleeting he had another pickerel fast, and beaching the brute after a mad fight in which the fish had rushed upstream and downstream and slantways and dartways, throwing bubbles and leaping on the metallic topside of the brook's darkening silver, he fought its agony with his rod. In the waning afternoon the rod bent, was another shadow satanic and potent, for although he could not see his line, the fish did not escape. It seemed to be fighting the bending of a magic wand.

There, he had it. The spinner was malevolently entangled in tongue and gristle. He shivered in the arriving dusk. The brook murmured of other matters now that the sun no longer insisted on pure cheer. How to save this pickerel with the fish blood coming redly from the green sides? Why must hooks be so obstinate when one's purpose was gentle, yet true gentleness knew naught of hooks? This fish was to die. Flopping, it put on a partial shroud of sand. His fingers were slimy. The hooks held while the darkness gathered; blood spots were everywhere. They were out with a bit of the jaw. He peered down at the fading eyes, the green gold chains the pickerel wore, the sharp teeth in the sighing jaws.

He banged a rock on the blackish topside. Merciful to put things out of misery, people said. Mercy? This pound of life wanted to live, even to continue gasping on land. The spine gave way. The gills distended. More blood spilled. He left it there, stood up and exclaimed, "Faugh."

He took his rod apart, hurried up the timeless brook that had nevertheless, with curious stealth, allowed the sun to go and something sunless to usurp. And there was an end. Let the pickerel be a sacrifice to the girl. He had come to another wire fence. Crawling under this he felt abruptly

free from the spring thrall between the wires. He was man again to love if she had waited. She had. She looked lonely in the old field with its broken grey bridge and stone piles. He went to her.

Whence came the sudden quailing, the sudden pressure of something lost? not alone from the darkness or the spring haunting it. . . . Dark it was but not enough to shawl her loneliness. She was not a dryad. Dryads are never lonely. I wish I had that last pickerel, he thought, to prove I haven't wasted my time.

## THE KISS

By ARTHUR SHUMWAY

It was over in a second. Clumsy hands held her shoulders, wet lips smacked loudly on her burning cheek, and Nadine Eubank had been kissed for the first time in her life by a boy outside of kinfolk.

Joey Egan, that cute, red-headed new boy from the North began to slip an arm around her waist. "Let's have another," he whispered hoarsely. Nadine groped for the knob, opened the door and let in the light. "Aw, for cryin' out loud," complained Joey.

Nadine stood still. The heat in her cheeks burned through her body, then gave way to a sudden chill. Her ears rang. Itchings and tinglings were going on inside her.

"Hey, who's next?" demanded Tommy Parsons, the "postmaster."

"Lois," Nadine stammered.

"Lois!" Tommy was scornful. "Any-time! It's got to be a boy."

"Well, *Wade*."

"Say, he's your cousin."

"That's all right if he is."

"It ain't either."

Nadine was ready to cry. "It is all right, I tell you. It is too all right!"

"Aw-nuts. Letter for Wade Sparkman, then. Come on, Wade, and take your old castor oil."

Nadine touched her lips to her cousin's cheek and slipped out of the closet. When she saw the grinning circle she dropped her head and made for the door. Outside, she stopped and began to sob. She didn't want to cry and tried not to, but it was no use. Finally she felt somewhat more calm, except that she was weighed down with the

realization that she had kissed a boy—and a Catholic. She knew it was awfully wrong. Her mother had told her—

Suddenly she remembered how long she had dallied. The swelling in her throat returned. Weak and frightened, she began to run.

She realized she would have to lie. She couldn't tell what she had been doing. As it was, her mother probably would beat her until she couldn't stand, and if she found out she had let a boy kiss her there would be no telling. How many times had her mother warned her, in pain of an immediate whipping and certain, eventual hell-fire, never to let any boy so much as lay a hand on her?

She could see her mother now, waiting with a strap. She could imagine that thin, severe face, with eyes that strained out of the dark, bluish pits, cheeks that were hollow and the flat color of drum-heads, hair lank and oily and streaked, and a scrawny neck that craned forward from a flat, pigeon-boned chest.

Sure enough, her mother was at the door when she stumbled onto the porch. Una Eubank's eyes were popping more than usual and her lips were a narrow line.

"Where you been to, this hour?" she demanded. Her harsh voice was shrill now in anger.

"I been to Jenny Otises, ma'm, playin' dolls."

"You been to Jenny Otises, have you, playin' dolls, have you? Well, I'll play dolls with you. Do you know what time it is? Look at me. Do you? Do you know it's past five o'clock? Me wantin' you here and workin' my legs off till I'm

all whupped down without you here to hep me. Hain't I told you time and time again you was to come straight home from the school house? You get along in here now. Soon as you've hepped me set a supper for your no-good pa I declare I'm goin' to give you a dressin' you won't forget."

Nadine ran for her apron. She was relieved to know the whipping was postponed, for her father frequently prevented them. But, my Lord, what if her mother could see inside her and see she'd kissed Joey Egan?

Una came whisking into the kitchen. "You hurry yourself along now, Naddy," she said. "Me and you is goin' to the preachin' downtown tonight. It'll do you good and maybe teach you to mind your ma and do what she tells you. You hear?"

Twice, as her hands trembled, Nadine juggled dishes near the edge of the table. Inside she seemed to be whirling. Her stomach was queasy as if she had run herself out of breath and gulped down a glass of ice-water. She couldn't look at her mother's feet, much less her eyes. Fumbling with the dishes would give her away for sure.

Una came over and gave her a side-long stare. "What's ailin' you? What you been up to?" she demanded.

"Nothin', ma'm."

"Don't tell me —"

"Honest. I just ran too fast tryin' to get home is all."

"Serves you right, too," her mother said, with a touch of triumph in her sharp voice. "You'd a come on home like I been tellin' you time and time again and you wouldn't a'run your insides out. Don't worry, miss. I hain't forgot you got a whuppin' comin'."

Una started for the kitchen. Nadine looked after her to see if she were being watched, just in time to be the target of another suspicious glance. She nearly dropped the dish she was holding.

There was no doubt in her mind that she had done a fearfully wrong thing when she let Joey Egan kiss her. Time and time again her mother had told her what happened to girls that started out that way, letting boys paw them and kiss them. They went from bad to worse and finally ran off and that was the end. In the city they got into wickedness and became "lost women." They went straight to Hell. No nice man would ever marry them. They sickened and eventually died awful deaths.

Nadine began to pity herself and to condemn

Joey Egan for his part in her downfall. More than anything else she wanted to let down and cry, and that, she realized, would be the one certain thing that would bring her mother swooping down upon her for a confession. Somehow, she went on setting the table, walking aimlessly back and forth between the kitchen and the table.

She heard a clumping of feet on the back steps. In came her father, whistling a happy nigger song. His appearance was like a reprieve.

"Hey there, little sugar," he said to her, tossing his black hat on a chair, "how you been today?"

He came over and rubbed a fist playfully over her scalp. This act of friendliness brought tears to her eyes. To hide them she threw her arms around her father's lean waist.

"What's all this? Your ma been jawin' you again, Nadine?"

She held him tighter.

"She has, hey? Well, now. Well, now. Her bark's worse than her bite. You ought to know that by now."

Nadine looked up in time to see her mother coming pugnaciously into the room. Instinctively, as if caught in mischief, she slipped away and hung her head.

"What's all this talk?" Una demanded.

"What's what?" asked Brad pleasantly.

"You know without my tellin' you. What you been tellin' this scamp? How'm I ever goin' to pound any sense into her head with you buttin' in, d'you 'spose. How am I?"

"I don't know as you are goin' to pound anything into Nadine, Uny."

"What?"

"I just said I don't reckon you *are* goin' to learn Nadine anything by poundin' it into her. That's what I said and that's what I meant. Seems like you get mad awful easy anymore without no cause of any kind."

"I get mad easy, do I? I do, do I? Well, I reckon you'd get mad. I reckon you'd flare up if this young one was to come home here past five and you tellin' her time and time again to get herself straight home from the school house. You'd be mad if you had that much gumption. I done told Naddy I was fixin' to whup her and that's exactly what I aim to do, too. And now she sneaks herself around the house like she'd been out stealin' somethin'. She's been up to somethin' more than gettin' home late an' I'm goin' to see to *that* and don't you worry yourself none or come stickin' *your* nose in."

Brad shrugged and gave Nadine a gentle pat on the buttocks.

"You take on more than is good for you, Uny — or anybody else," he said calmly. "You got no call to whup Nadine. She's been gettin' home regular every day. Seems like she might want to stop and play once in a while. Great Lord, you know she ain't any animal or grown-up woman."

"It don't make no difference what she ain't. She's goin' to mind or else she'll be spoilt rotten. An' I'm goin' to whup her good, you hear?"

Brad wiped the sweat from his brown forehead and narrowed his tired eyes. He drew a deep breath of the stuffy air and looked long at Una.

"I *hear*," he said. "I *been* hearin'— a damn long time. Now, *you* hear. You cain't see Nadine laugh anymore but what you got to set down and whup her and you cain't hear me say nothin' or talk two words to me without shoutin' like I was a nigger. One more word out of you about whuppin' this gal and you're goin' to be plenty sorry, I swear."

Brad was opening and closing his bony, brown fingers rapidly. They were wet and he wiped them on his trousers and went into the kitchen. He stared out at the garden patch a long time. Una said nothing. She stared at Brad's back, clutching her own fingers, biting her lower lip and breathing rapidly. Nadine watched her parents. The veins in her mother's thin neck stood out like welts from a whip. Finally, Una sniffed and whisked into the kitchen. "Nadine," she said in a voice that was low, hard, and hollow, "get them grits and greens onto the table and set down."

Supper was silent and tasteless. For Nadine the only relief was when her father winked at her and puffed his cheeks out with a mouthful of coffee and pretended he was going to blow it on her. When the meal was over it was a relief to hear the rattle of the dishes and feel them, solid, smooth, and slippery, in the warm, soapy water. It was still more relief to rub them carefully with a towel and put them, one by one, in their proper places in the cupboard, clean and definitely dismissed from further consideration.

Nadine heard her father start playing "Turkey in the Straw" on his harmonica. She looked quickly at her mother, afraid the sound would set her off again, but Una was looking into the cupboard, with her back turned.

Nadine took off her apron and went into the bedroom. She heard the sound of the harmonica grow closer and saw her father coming in af-

ter her. He brought the tune to a definite end, smiled, and then looked carefully toward the kitchen. When he turned back he said, "Sugar, what's the real trouble?"

Nadine turned away and shook her head. She was afraid to try to speak.

Brad drew her over to him, sat down and took her on his lap.

"What were you doin', honey? Playin' somewhere along the way home?"

She nodded.

"Whereabouts?" He was speaking softly so Una could not hear.

"Otises."

"Well, I don't see nothin' so wrong about that. Course your ma did tell you to get right home and all, but a gal has to play once in a while, don't she, honey?"

Nadine nodded. She was trying to keep from crying.

"Well now. Well now," her father said. "What's all this? Your ma didn't do nothin' to you, did she?"

She shook her head.

"You hain't been messin' around any, have you? Have you? What now? It couldn't be so terrible, could it?"

She had to tell it. "I let a boy kiss me," she whispered solemnly as if she were confessing a murder. Her throat choked up and she began to sob.

Her father stroked her yellow hair, soothingly. "How come you to do that?" he asked, gently.

"P'postoffice!" she sobbed.

She did not see the sad smile on his lips and the look of pity and bewilderment in his eyes. He went on stroking her hair.

Nadine heard her mother's footsteps. She wriggled out of her father's arms and became busy at the dresser. Una's form appeared in the glass. "Handsome, ain't you?" she sniffed. "You needn't get worked up over your looks. Wait'll you have to slave the way I have for two ungrateful good-for-nothin's and you'll think different and look different. Come along, now. What would the evangelist preacher say if he knew you was the kind of a silly gal that gawged at herself in the lookin' glass?"

"Uny," Brad said. Una tilted her head, then closed her lips and went about straightening and combing her hair.

"Mamma," Nadine said.

"Yes."

"Daddy spoke to you."

"Uny, why cain't you answer when you're spoken to?" Brad said, patiently. "Where you two goin'? I was goin' to help Nadine fix up a fish pole."

"Fish pole! No such thing, you ain't. We're goin' to the preachin' an' you'd be goin' too if you wasn't an old heathen."

"Nadine don't want to go to no revival meetin'. Church once a week's plenty and to spare. Ain't it, Nadine?"

"Ain't you a fine father? Ain't you a fine, good Christian, though, talkin' like that right in front of your own daughter? It's a wonder the Lord don't snatch your tongue. It surely is. Nobody can go to church a time too many. It's a pity you wouldn't go instead of goin' off fishin' and such on a Sunday. I declare."

Brad winked at Nadine, shrugged carelessly and walked away. "If you can stand all that hollerin' and bellerin', Nadine, I reckon I can stand havin' you there. Your ma is goin' to work herself up so keepin' out of hell first thing she knows she's goin' to wake up an' find herself there. She's goin' to church you blind, honey. But don't you worry. We'll fix up that pole one of these days like I said and I'm goin' to take you to Bear lake. You wait."

"Yes," Una said, "you just wait."

Brad chuckled and went on. Nadine liked him more than ever.

Una and Nadine started for downtown. They went down the red clay street and turned onto the main thoroughfare that ran across the county to join the Dixie highway. On the corner above Eubanks' was the house where old Mrs. Tateman lived. Nadine edged away. Old Mrs. Tateman was so neat and smiling and told her not to play leapfrog on Sunday and always chased the boys and girls away from in front of her house.

Nadine avoided looking at Mrs. Tateman's prim, cold, white house, feeling, as whenever she passed it, that its old mistress was watching her from each curtained window with forbidding, omniscient eyes. She felt that old Mrs. Tateman could see inside her now where she was hiding her guilt of having kissed Joey Egan. Old Mrs. Tateman would be over and tell her mother right off.

All the way to the lot where the tent was pitched Nadine felt as if she were running a gauntlet of penetrating, reproving eyes. Each person on the street seemed to be a potential in-

former who knew her secret. That secret seemed to be the subject of whispered gossip throughout the town. It hung heavily in the warm, blossom-scented air, making it thick and hard to breathe; it lurked behind bushes; it peered out windows; it was everywhere.

Fords and teams were hitched along the street in front of the tent. A stream of people kept entering. Over the door was a large sign, painted on yellow oilcloth in flaring, red letters. "WELCOME TO SALVATION" it said. "Come in and hear the Word and see the Light. Dr. J. MOODY LUTHER, the great Healer, will guide your steps from the Pathway to Hell to the Gates of Heaven. Help him fight Satan. Get to know God. Come ye who are afflicted and leave your crutches at the door. Admission free."

The tent was nearly full when Una and Nadine filed down the middle aisle in search of seats. Nadine, her sin growing more and more painful within her, felt trapped in the stuffy tent. No doubt the people were whispering.

The only seats were in the front row, directly beneath the platform. Nadine sat down and stared at the hard-packed, bare ground.

Her mother nudged her. "Look," she said, "that there's Clay Murfree, the druggist. And there's Old Man Adam Shopely with the white tie on. See, they come where they'll hear somethin' that's good for 'em an' your pa stays away."

Nadine looked at the ground. A brood of large red ants were scurrying about their hill, carrying something into the tunnel. Being an ant was easy. You weren't bothered with sins and scoldings and quarrels and people.

Suddenly the buzzing of voices stopped, changed to a general excited whisper and then hushed entirely. Nadine looked up. Towering over her was an enormous, black-looking man. He was a man to remember. Though he seemed to be old, he had a mane of thick, black hair, so unnaturally black that under the hanging lantern it gave a blue light. His eyebrows were the same blue-black. Nadine was conscious of a menace in the way they jutted over his eyes — eyes with a strange, live depth and fire. They caught and burned the light that streamed down from the gasoline lantern casting deep shadows from the high cheek-bones down the hollows of the long, horsey, homely face. This man, standing above her in loose black garments, had an unearthly look that began to rouse in Nadine's troubled mind the terrifying idea of death and a stern hereafter.

She was frightened before him, mean and ashamed.

He bowed a moment, solemnly, then straightened, smiled broadly and began to speak. Under the gasoline lantern his mouth flashed gold. His voice was low and kind and strong. "My friends of Cumaloosa," he said, "the reason why I am here tonight to help your good pastors is to save — to save erring souls from the fiery and everlasting tortures of a hell that is as real as the nose on your face, a hell that hungers and seethes for the unthinking wicked of this world."

Nadine could not get comfortable in her seat. She felt vaguely disturbed. She shifted and looked at her mother. Una's eyes were popping more than ever and they were shining with a light that frightened the girl; her body seemed to be trembling faintly and her breath was more rapid than usual.

Nadine looked down at the ground and saw again her brood of ants. They were going into their hole, down into the ground. How far did ant-holes go? What was beneath them? What was under everything? Was that really where Hell was? She shuddered inwardly. How she would hate to go there, to burn forever and ever and never have any place to sit down or any water to drink but just to keep on walking around and around and burning no matter how nearly dead you were; for ever and ever and ever. And forever really meant forever. There wasn't any end.

The thought of eternity made breathing difficult. Nadine tried to forget the thought, beginning to take inventory of her good deeds and her bad deeds to satisfy herself that, after all, a forever of flames was not meant for her — why, she was just a little girl! But the thought of Joey Egan's kiss intruded. It alone seemed to overbalance the good deeds. She *would* have to go to Hell. To burn for ever and ever. Sweat began to break out over her body; her clothing, light as it was, seemed to stifle her; she felt as she had when coming down with the grippie.

She looked at her mother, afraid that she might be watching and prying into her guilty mind. Una Eubank sat forward in her seat, her eyes on The Great Healer, that strange light burning in them.

Nadine looked up at the platform. She saw a stocky, sullen woman, dressed in black, with a small white bonnet, sitting at a little organ. Beside the organ stood an angular young woman with a long, red face, and beside her a short,

pasty fat man with a silly half-smile on his loose mouth. Both the man and woman were robed in white, looking somewhat like Nadine's mental picture of souls in Heaven.

"We'll now have a hymn," The Great Healer announced, "a cheering song to help us as God's own soldiers to march against Satan who is lying in ambush just over our doorstep. 'Onward Christian Soldiers'!"

They sang "Onward Christian Soldiers" and Nadine rose with all the others. They sang it twice, louder the second time, The Great Healer flapping his arms and stamping his foot. Nadine was glad when she could sit down. Her mother though, was still standing. Her pigeon-boned chest was rising and falling rapidly. Nadine pulled her sleeve and whispered, "Mamma."

Without warning, The Great Healer jumped upon the table on the platform and thrust an accusing finger at the audience. Nadine gulped; she felt the finger was going down her throat. He shouted and began to scold the audience for its sinfulness. Nadine bowed her head and stared at the ground. She tried to imagine herself away from the place, but the powerful voice kept beating her mind like a whip. The words kept coming and she kept trying to ignore them. She felt as if she would lose her breath.

"Petting!" She heard the voice repeat the word and her mind began to follow. "Oh, sinners, that's another thing that's fanning the flames of Hell and sending the Devil new victims. Petting, you say. You think it's smart, some of you; you think it don't mean anything. That curse of the modern civilization, that slippery banana peel on the slanting road to Hell. Oh, sinners, listen to me, will you!"

Nadine's eyes were on his dirty white canvas shoes. Her sweaty, impotent hands gripped the seat of her chair.

"Oh, sinners, where do our prostitutes come from? Go right ahead and blush. You got to face the facts. Listen to me and I'll tell you where they come from. Get this. Get this. These scarlet women come from right here in your own town, from every town where the parents don't obey their sacred trust and keep their children from the ways of wickedness. God help me, folks, I'm going to smash the truth down your throats! I'm going to cram it down, do you hear me!"

Never in her life had Nadine been so thoroughly miserable; never had she felt so down-

right wicked. She knew well enough what The Great Healer was talking about. Wasn't Joey Egan's kiss on her lips? She wanted to run, but her legs seemed to have turned into something kneady like unbaked bread.

"The kiss is a sacred custom for mother and child, for man and wife and that's how it ought to be kept!" the voice went on. Nadine heard it pause. "Here before me is a little girl," it said, "a dear, sweet little girl, innocent and untouched by the world, her whole life ahead of her. Ah, my friends, I'd rather see this little child dead — yes, thrice dead and in the deepest grave — than to know that *she* was going to be started on that slippery downhill path to Hell. God bless her, mamma, *you* look after her, will you? How would the fine young man that's going to marry her someday feel? You know how he'd feel all right. It would break his heart to know, that's what it would do. Listen to me, folks. Can't you just *see* what I'm trying to tell you? Won't you help me? Won't you ask Jesus to help us all? God bless you, my friends, I know you will." The voice stopped with a choke.

Nadine felt choked, frozen, and she felt that her mother's two popped eyes were burning on her. She looked quickly at her mother. Una was smiling foolishly and staring up at The Great Healer.

Nadine had to sit still for another hour while The Great Healer preached, rolled up his sleeves and pretended to beat the old Devil out of their souls, prayed for sinners and cripples and led the audience in song. Finally he took a collection. Meanwhile she wanted nothing more than to be alone, to throw herself on her bed, on the ground, anywhere, and sob until relief of some sort came to her. She had to sit and wait, too, while her mother fought through the crowd to a place under the platform steps where The Great Healer was shaking hands. When Una returned Nadine noticed that her eyes were even more inflamed than they had been during the meeting.

Her mother took her wet, limp hand and led her through the jam and outside. "What in heaven's name is wrong with *you*?" she asked, staring down into her face.

Nadine lowered her head. "Nothin," she mumbled. The word knotted in her throat.

"I declare you're a show. You sick or what?" her mother persisted, as she whisked her out of the light and down Hardy street away from the crowd.

Nadine shook her head. Tears were beginning to come and she was afraid to speak.

"What is the matter with you," her mother demanded. "You tell me, you hear!" Nadine recognized the tone in her mother's voice that came when she was both annoyed and worried.

She did not answer. She wished the world would end on the spot. All the way down Hardy street and past Mrs. Tateman's prim, white house again the torture continued. Nadine bore it silently, though her chest seemed to be bursting.

"Now, for the *last* time, you tell me what ails you," Una demanded when they reached the house. "You stop snifflin' and answer me, y'hear. Somethin's the matter an' I'm goin' to find out what. Have you been eatin' somethin' you shouldn't? Are you sick, Nadine?"

Nadine wiped her eyes, gulped and answered the question with a desperate nod, for the light in the house told her that her father was home. Anything to keep from another family fight. She had been already the center of enough attention and trouble. All she wanted was to be let alone — alone!

"I reckon I better get a doctor," Una said. "Whyn't you say somethin' was wrong with you when we went off tonight?"

"No, please!" Nadine whispered. Nothing could be worse than having the doctor come and say there was nothing wrong with her. She began to pray silently, "Oh, God, please make her let me alone."

"The doctor's comin' and that's all there is to it!" her mother snapped, pulling her up the porch steps. "I'm not goin' to have you come down with somethin' like this. You're goin' straight to bed till he comes, too."

Nadine saw her father coming from the kitchen. His big, black hat was still on and he was swaying unsteadily.

"So — you been out drinkin' that rotten 'shine again!" Una said, glaring at him disdainfully.

Nadine seldom had seen him so stern. He was staring hard into her mother's eyes. "Now what you been doin' to this gal?" he demanded.

"It's a pity you wouldn't take more interest in her yourself instead of snappin' at me every time I try to pound some sense into her head and goin' off drinkin' and makin' a disgrace of yourself when she's sick."

"What's the matter, Nadine?" he asked, putting his arm around her shoulders and feeling her forehead.

"She was shakin' and carryin' on like she was comin' down with a chill, that's what," Una said sharply. "I knew somethin' was wrong with her from the minute she came home late from school, but do you think *she'd* say a word? No, she'd died on my hands first. An' if you had any sense you'd be goin' for the doctor instead of jawin' at me."

Una strode into the kitchen.

"Don't let her get the doctor, daddy," Nadine whispered. "I'm not sick."

"What is the matter, honey?"

How could she say it? "Nothin'," she mumbled, turning her head.

"Now, sugar, somethin's the matter. Tell me, now. I won't let her jaw you."

"I—I can't."

She felt him lift her face close to his and smelled the heavy odor of the moonshine whiskey and knew that he was looking searchingly at her closed eyes. "Please, Nadine," she heard him say. He said it so gently, so sadly that she felt she could not refuse him.

"I told you. Don't you remember?"

She pushed her face into his shoulder; the tears were coming again; her voice was choking.

"Where'd you put that bottle of six-sixty-six?" Una called from the kitchen. Nadine felt her father's body stiffen, then relax.

"In the cupboard. On the top shelf," he answered. "What did you tell me, sugar?" he whispered to Nadine.

"I don't see why you can't leave things in their place," grumbled her mother from the kitchen.

"Was it about that boy?" Brad whispered quickly.

Nadine nodded.

"Has your ma been after you about that?" he asked, gripping her arm.

"You might be gettin' that gal to bed," her mother called.

Nadine felt her father's big chest rise, then settle.

"Has she?" he asked her sternly.

Footsteps and the rattle of a glass and spoon warned her that her mother was coming. She nudged her father desperately.

"Have you been scoldin' Nadine about that boy?" she heard him say to her mother in a hard voice. Now she was in for it; she squirmed around behind her father's big body. Her mother had stopped short. Her mouth was open and she was staring at them. Nadine could hold back

no longer the sobs that were swelling in her throat.

"What boy?" Una asked awesomely.

Brad looked quickly down at Nadine.

"Now!" said her mother, triumphantly, "it come *out*, does it? What boy is this?" She put down the bottle, glass and spoon. "So—she's been out carryin' on with the boys, has she?"

"Listen," Brad said, with menace in his voice, "I don't want another damn word out of you about Nadine. She ain't sick, but it's a damn wonder with the way you been at her. She's going to bed, y'hear, an' you ain't goin' to so much as lay a finger on her."

"I don't know I ain't. I don't know I ain't. You keep your drunken nose out of this. Now, what's all this about a boy, Nadine?"

Nadine held desperately to her father's arm.

"She let some youngster kiss her playin' post-office is all—an' she's been scared to death you'd find it out. That's the kind of influence you got on her—scare her to death."

"So!" Una said. "No wonder you was squirm-in' around in there when the Great Healer was preachin'. You're the kind he was talkin' about—goin' around carryin' on. You heard what he said, too. God's goin' to punish you good."

"God ain't goin' to do no such damn thing," Brad retorted scornfully. "You damn fool, you! Listenin' to a lot of lies by some old windbag of a shyster preacher howlin' about hell-fire an' damnation. No wonder this poor gal is scared to death. What'd that old bastard say to her?"

Angry syllables snarled in Una's throat before she could speak. Nadine drew farther back.

"You!" her mother sputtered. "You drunken old loafer. You talk thataway about a man like Dr. Luther. Why, you ain't fit to shine his shoes. I suppose you're *proud* of this gal now? Glad to have her goin' around lettin' the boys paw her over? No tellin' how long she's been at it, comin' home an' lyin'—an' after all I been tellin' her time and time again."

"I haven't!" Nadine sobbed.

"What'd that old shyster say to her?" Brad insisted. "I'll bust his damn neck."

"Yes you will! Yes, you will! He'll bust *yourn*. He's got the strength of *God* in him. You want to know what he said, do you? Well, *I'll* tell you what he said. He said he'd rather see this gal *dead* than to know that's the way she was doin'!"

"An' you sat there an' let him go on?"

Una snorted. "He wasn't talkin' to her alone, but she sure took it in, let me tell you. An' he's right, too. You should'a heard what he said an' maybe you wouldn't stand there takin' her part. God's goin' to punish her and you see." Una laughed, a quick hysterical laugh like a snarl. "An' you can't stop *Him* either!" she shrilled.

"Oh, is that so? Well, there ain't nobody goin' to punish her, God nor nobody else an' you can tell your damn old God that and tell him I said so! Come along, Nadine."

Una gasped and stared at Brad. For a moment she had no voice. Then, "It's a wonder He don't strike you dead!" she cried.

"You shut your mouth," said Brad. Nadine could feel his body tremble.

Her mother's eyes terrified her. They seemed to be boiling out of their sockets. Her thin face was twitching violently and the veins in her forehead were standing out. Nadine felt giddy.

"I'll show *you*!" her mother screamed. She slapped Brad viciously, the blow catching him off his balance and sending him reeling into a chair. Nadine, struck by his hip, went staggering against the wall. "Mamma!" she sobbed.

"You *blasphemer*!" Una screamed at Brad. He had fallen sidewise across the chair. Una was after him, slapping with both hands. Nadine saw the hands dart in and out, then saw her father clap one big hand over his eyes and raise his other arm to defend himself. The arm struck her mother on the chest and sent her against the wall as if she had been a sack of rags.

"Don't, don't, don't!" Nadine screamed. She

was sick and weak. This was happening, this was happening, and she was seeing it.

Her mother sprang up again and went for Brad who still groped with his burning eyes. "Get away or, God damn you, I'll kill you!" he shouted.

"I'll show you!" Una screamed. "I'll show *you* if you're stronger than *God*!" She struck him again in the face, this time with her closed fist. "I got His strength in me," she shrilled as she hit him again. The chair, with Brad still in it, rolled to the floor.

"Stop it, damn you!" he shouted.

Nadine began to pray. She sobbed the words aloud: "Oh, Jesus, make her stop, Jesus. Oh, please, Jesus, make her stop. Don't let her hit him anymore."

"I'll fix him, God!" her mother screamed. "I'll beat that old Devil out of him." Nadine saw her seize the chair and, with a surprising strength, swing it up over her head.

Nadine sprang forward. "Mamma — *don't!*" she cried.

Down came the chair. Nadine turned away. She heard heavy wood thud dully on bone and flesh; she heard her father groan; she heard her mother scream, "I'll beat that Devil out of him, God!"

She swooped around, under the arc of the rising, falling chair, and clutched her mother's skinny body, sinking her nails into the bony sides, and sobbing her prayer, "Oh, please, Jesus, make her stop!" But the chair rose and fell, rose and fell.

## CUTTING DOCK

By LEO L. WARD

Tam Ryan was standing on the back steps of his little white house, his small reddish face tilted sidewise in an easy frown, his narrowed eyes blinking at the wet sunlit orchard. But Tam was not really looking at the orchard. He was gazing farther away, at a level black field already checkered with the faint green lines of young corn. He reached a groping hand up along the door jamb and stood leaning against his arm, one leg tossed carelessly across the other.

And now he heard his own voice speaking deep

within him. It seemed to come out of him very deliberately and insistently. He could hear it telling him that there was no use thinking about plowing any more corn for a while. Not for a day or two, anyway. Maybe not for a week. Like all the heavens dropping sudden into the earth. It would be a good long time before a sensible man would be thinking of getting back into the field after that. It would be a good week, anyway.

Tam's frown became more thoughtful and seri-

ous. He looked more intently at the field out beyond the orchard. The rain coming in early June like this, just the right time for the corn. If it'd just stay warm now. Make the corn jump right up out of the ground. You'd just see it grow under your eyes, that's what you would. Come out like a man's Monday beard.

Tam's frown disappeared for a moment. A quick grin pushed the mobile corners of his mouth out into his reddish face. Then, suddenly, the frown had returned. Tam's eyes all but blazed with anger as they were fixed on the orchard. He had been cutting the dock in that orchard for the past twenty years. Every rainy day in the summer, he'd been down there with a scythe, sweating, and cursing the place. It wasn't anything for a grown man to be doing. You'd never get done with it. You might as well be trying to cut the devil's tail off. You could be working at it till the Judgment and you'd never get rid of it. Growing again, right after you, before you put the scythe away.

Tam's face changed again, slowly. He looked very grave, and perplexed. But you couldn't let all that burdock be growing up like that — not all of it anyway, the whole summer long. Especially on rainy days like this. Neighbors going past and looking in like they did. Always trying to see everything. Just like they didn't know all the other things a man had to do around a place.

Tam was looking now helplessly toward the orchard, his eyes wide and his reddish brows arched and complaining. Slowly and reluctantly he uncrossed his legs. He would go out and start on it, anyway. That's what he would do. He could cut for a little while. Maybe Milt Bowyer would come along, or one of the Corey boys. If they did, he might go on in to town with them. He'd ought to go to town and see about things. Find out how the markets were going. Hadn't been down to town for he didn't know when. Seemed like months. Not since before he started plowing.

One of Tam's feet dropped heavily down from the step where he had been standing. His short legs carried him away from the house. He went down across the farm lot very slowly, his eyes dropped low as if to see whether his toes would keep moving on in front of him.

After some time he came out from a low tool shed with a large scythe swaying awkwardly upon his shoulder. As he came back through the farm lot, he stopped once or twice to set the scythe handle on the ground and reach out to feel the

blade. He shook his head contentedly, mumbling to himself. There was no need of putting the blade on the grinder. Just give it a good whetting. He'd have to ask the woman to turn the wheel if he put it on the grinder. When she was baking this way, she'd be more fuss than help. As he went on past the house, he caught the sweet, dry smell of the baking. He held his eyes resolutely in front of him, as if refusing to look toward the kitchen.

Tam finally stopped in the thick shade of the pear tree down behind the chicken house. The dock was lighter here. He would just work into it sort of gradually. The sharp whang of the whetstone changed gradually to a shrill singing above his head. He let the scythe down slowly, then stood waiting for a while. His face turned and he gazed intently up the road. No one was coming. There was no sound of wagon wheels. As he turned back, he stared grimly down at the dock. Finally he spread his short legs and bent, almost angrily, over the scythe.

As the blade slid easily through the wet dock, Tam's twisted frown began to drift out of his face. Occasionally his eyes dropped for an instant to his swinging arms. He began to think of his mowing. He always could mow well. Not like some men he'd seen. Pulling things up by the roots. Digging into the ground like they thought they were ditching. Didn't mind mowing so much. Not after he got started. Tam felt the large damp green leaves dropping over his feet, as he pushed forward, step by step. He heard the smooth slicing sound of the blade as it went through the dock. He felt the slight pull and lift of the scythe in his arms and shoulders, the freer, easier rhythm of the mowing.

At last a dark wet finger or two began to spread out from the galluses on Tam's swaying back. Then he felt his shirt catching and pulling on his shoulders. Soon the scythe began to swing more slowly, leaving a narrower swath of the silvery green undersides of the great leaves behind it. Then the mowing had stopped entirely.

Tam lifted the scythe blade slowly. He reached up and grasped the blade, as if he were going to give it a further whetting. But he only stood there, leaning idly against the support of the scythe.

Out beyond the shade of the orchard, he saw the black field and the faint green lines of the corn. Farther away, the darker green of an oats field waved slowly out over a low hill. Beyond,

but not very far away, masses of black and purplish cloud were dissolving in the white morning sun. Tam's eyes came back to the cornfield. Everywhere over the field the sun was pouring its thick warm light into the dark earth. Here and there long narrow strips of glinting water lay between the rows of corn. Tam's gaze followed two of the faint green lines all the way across the field. His eyes were wide and bright now, and seemed filled with a quiet wonderment. He was thinking about the corn. How the rain would come like yesterday, and then the sun like it was this morning. And the corn would leap right up to your knees. And then up to your waist, and right up to your shoulders. Then the tassels would be there all at once, over the whole field. And the ears would come, on all the stalks. It was funny the way the corn grew up like that. Just from the seed you put down in the soft plowed ground.

Once in a while the shadow of a cloud pushed slowly across the field. Then the sun would return, brighter than before, pouring its warm light everywhere over the dark wet field. A kind of misty steam was now rising here and there, making the sunlight soft and almost creamy farther away, over at the other side of the field.

Then Tam again felt the dampness of his shirt. His face and hands seemed suddenly sticky. The air in the orchard had become very heavy, and it was filled with the prickling smell of the cut burdock. Tam's eyes dropped before him, in a sour stare at the uncut dock. He'd ought to get some more of it cut before it got any hotter. Slowly, reluctantly, he pulled the broken piece of a whetstone from his back pocket, and now the still orchard rang for a few moments with an angry clang. The scythe was dropped carelessly down among the burdock. Before starting to mow, Tam turned his head. His eyes followed the road to where, far away, it seemed to bend around the dark green blot of Jameson's orchard. No one was coming. He listened for some time. He couldn't even hear the remote clacking of wagon wheels.

Tam turned back and bent over the scythe again. His eyes began following the blade as it went back and forth among the thick stems of the dock. His face was very red now, and it was becoming wet and shiny. His arms kept swinging in a half-circle before him, mechanically, listlessly. He went on working for a long time, his eyes glowering constantly down at the dock.

Suddenly the mowing stopped again. Tam

stood tautly, his body still bent over the scythe. He turned his head quickly, and saw Milt Bowyer stopping his wagon out beside the orchard. Tam yanked the scythe out of the burdock. He tossed it lightly over his shoulder and started for the house, at the same time shouting to Bowyer to wait for a minute or two there on the road.

Tam stopped at the house, and poked his head in the kitchen door, the blade of the scythe sticking rakishly out behind him. "I'm thinking I'll have to be going in to town," he said, almost shouting. He raised his voice more confidently, till it went bawling through the house. "I'll have to be going down to the elevator to see about the markets now."

A large red-faced woman was bent over the stove in the kitchen, holding the door of the oven half-open while she examined the bread that was baking.

Tam's voice suddenly dropped to a nervous complaining tone. "Milt Bowyer is going in to town in his wagon, and I'll just be going along and see about the markets."

The big woman shut the oven door and rose from the stove. She looked out at Tam, saying nothing.

"I'll just be leaving the scythe out here against the tree," Tam said, pleadingly. "You won't need to be bothering about putting it away. I'll be finishin' the dock this afternoon. I'll be back early."

The woman continued looking steadily out at Tam. Her big face was set queerly in a kind of contradiction. Her mouth seemed to be smiling and her eyes were filled with a kind of dull anger. "Tomorrow!" she said, her voice coming in a single, muffled snort.

Tam moved a step or two back from the door. He stood there, hesitating for a few moments. Then he turned slowly, and with cautious steps went toward the big willow tree over beside the milk house. He leaned the scythe, blade uppermost, against the trunk of the tree. He started immediately toward the road. As soon as he had passed the house, he broke into a kind of loping half-run down through the tall uncut grass of the lawn. Then he went hopping back the road toward the wagon. His short legs scrambled over the big wheel, and at last he was perched on the high spring-seat beside Milt Bowyer. As the team started, he burst into a running torrent of talk, about everything — about the rain, about the corn, about his having most of the dock cut al-

ready, and his needing to go down and see about some things in town and find out what the markets were doing.

Just as they were passing the end of the orchard Tam glanced back over Bowyer's shoulder. He could just see his wife through the trees. She was standing out at the corner of the kitchen, her hand on her hip. Tam's face jerked back toward the team, and he burst out talking again, more rapidly and earnestly than before. After a little while his head again turned nervously and he looked back at the house. He could still see the big woman. Suddenly she went from the kitchen over to-

ward the willow tree. He saw her grasp the scythe, then go down past the milk-house toward the tool shed. Tam began talking again, more emphatically than before, explaining to the silent man beside him about the rain yesterday, and how the corn would all be leaping right up out of the ground. Tam's face grew less nervous and more relaxed, but his voice ran on endlessly about the corn, at times rising to a kind of reckless, confident oratory. Why, that corn — nothing could hold it now. It would beat a Monday beard. It would be trying to jump away from its own roots. Grow like the devil's nails, that's what it would.

## CAMILLA

By A. E. FISHER

"This," said my mother firmly, "is Camilla."

"Good God!" said my father.

She had entered our darkened room without saying a word, gone to the window, thrown back the blinds we had closed to keep out the sun, and then, while we irritably blinked our eyes at the hot light flowing over us like a wave, she had drawn the scared little girl forward.

I had seen the orphans gathered that morning, before the church, very clean, with their large eyes that looked eagerly into faces, and their long thin legs, and their dusty shoes. Huddling together about a brisk, worried looking nun, they had stared with a frail eagerness at the citizens of this fiery village, longing to run into the woods, and to be given cool blueberries and cream, and to be taken home. Like a mass of flotsam thrown up by the river on our shore, a small heap of things that had no great value, they remained where they had been deposited, very close together, wondering if someone might not soon come to claim them, someone very rich, perhaps, or very kind.

The townspeople had smiled at them, on their way to the drugstores for cool drinks, and hurried by very quickly, mopping their brows. A few, with guilty looks, fussed at their coats and stared up at the sky, or across the street, or into shop windows, or anywhere except at the brisk shepherdess whose eyes rested so anxiously and accusingly upon them, as if she might have something personal and desperately unpleasant to say if they paused near her for a moment, or seemed interested in this pallid merchandise the city had not cared for, and had therefore sent to them.

After church, my mother, with two pink spots in her cheeks, had sent me straight home, and during the next half hour, while I sat with my father in the oppressed, heavy, shadowed heat of our parlor, I had been too uncomfortable and lazy to remember the orphans, or anything in the world except my damp, itching body, and the cool lusciousness of lemon ice cream. Then she had come in, bringing Camilla with her, and my father had said "Good God."

"She is going to stay with us, aren't you, Camilla?" said my gentle mother, her voice not quite so firm as it had been. She was very much afraid of her husband. I think she had been waiting several moments outside the door getting up her courage.

My father sat up. He searched fretfully for his slippers, which had fallen off. He looked steadily at the small orphan, his face red.

"You'd better come into the other room," he said. "There are too many children in this one." And without a glance at her he stalked out into the kitchen.

She dropped the little girl's hand, and looked as though she had forgotten the orphan altogether. Then she turned and hurried after him.

When the door closed, the orphan and I looked at each other, for the first time. Then we glanced hastily away. She was very pretty, with short dark hair, pale skin, and large eyes that had a curious listening expression in them.

Someone had dressed her up very carefully, despite the plainness of her white frock; someone had pieced out its meagre attractiveness with a

narrow green ribbon, a locket, and two minute ear-rings; someone had brushed her hair too, and washed her hands, and dusted her queer cloth-topped shoes; impatiently perhaps, in great hurry certainly, someone had done all this, hoping it would suffice to lure another person, through a sense of duty, through pity or shame, to take over the same multiple tasks for a little while, if not irrevocably.

At this moment my father's voice came more loudly from behind the kitchen door.

I had overheard a neighbor, a year or so before, say to a friend: "Mr. James, you know, is a very choleric man."

And ever since, whenever I had seen his face grow red, or his hands begin to tremble; whenever I had heard the nervous tap of his feet or the slight metallic sound in his voice I had learned to recognize as the forced note of anger, that phrase would begin repeating itself over and over in my empty head, like some Delphic pronouncement unutterably final and wise, a Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin that completely explained my father, and made of his rude passion, by the force of its magic potency, a simple, obvious, perfectly understandable thing.

But this orphan girl could not, of course, be expected to see into the heart of the matter so perfectly as I; hovering there like a bird that had got somehow into a cage, she remained very still, looking smaller than ever in her rumpled gown, too scared even to cry.

"My father," I said to her gravely, above the muffled sounds that echoed to us from the kitchen, "is a very choleric man."

That settled it, I thought: there could now be nothing more to say.

The anger in his voice, however, seemed to be disappearing. In a little while I heard them both talking quietly, even laughing.

Then my mother came out, looking very relieved and warm, her eyes reddened a little.

"You're to stay with us a week, perhaps more, but you mustn't mind anything he says, because he doesn't really mean it."

He had come out, too, and now stood irresolutely in the doorway, looking lost and perplexed, as he always did after being angry, as if he did not quite know where his passion had got him to. He looked terrifically hot.

"Is — is there anything you'd like, little girl?" he asked, mopping his fiery brow. "A doughnut? Do you think she'd like a doughnut?" he inquired

of my mother, as though it were a problem only a mature person could solve.

"Would you like a doughnut?" she asked Camilla, very much pleased at the way things had turned out.

"Yes, sir," said the small orphan, never taking her eyes off my father, and making a curtsey. "I think I'd like some water, too, if you kindly please."

Thus was Camilla the orphan received into our house; thus was the homeless one made welcome, for a week.

It was on a night we had returned from a picnic in the woods (a month later) that my mother first began asking mysterious questions of Camilla. We had been sitting on the dark lawn, watching the beams of fireflies that had strayed from the meadows, and listening to the voices of marsh frogs in a placid contentment that seemed hovering palpably round us in the warm air, as we gazed into each other's white and shadowy faces without needing to say a word, and let the warm relaxation of sleep steal over us as gently and gratefully as the dew that was covering the grass with its pale film. My father's pipe glowed intermittently upon his face, showing us his heavy somnolent eyes. Camilla was on the step beside him, her head resting against his knee. She was tired out: she had run and chattered all afternoon, and filled a whole pail with blueberries, and found a swallow's nest.

All day it had seemed as though something momentous was about to happen; more than once I had come upon them talking earnestly together in low tones, and I had listened to careful questions about Camilla's dead parents.

"My mother was a nice lady. She wore a silk dress," she told them, in her precise, rather breathless voice. "Everybody liked my mother."

"I am sure they did, dear. And you always lived in the city?"

Many questions, all about who her father was, and what her mother had died of last year.

"My father had a moustache, and when he came to see us my mother would be glad and kiss him. She would kiss me, too. My mother —"

"But didn't your parents live together? They hadn't quarreled, Camilla?"

N-no, she didn't think they had. And they went in the country once, because she saw a cow. And she remembered —

When bedtime came my father carried her upstairs. She had gone to sleep in his arms.

Only once or twice since that hot Sunday when Camilla first stepped timidly into our house, had I seen him in a temper: the child's presence seemed to diffuse some subtle charm, some tranquil influence that made it easier for him to possess his soul.

I was sent to bed early that night, but I heard them talking very late in the kitchen. The next morning my mother came downstairs in her best gown, before Camilla was awake, and told me I must harness the pony to take her to the station.

"I wish I were able to go, but you can find out everything, and then we can arrange it afterwards," said my father, as she took her seat in the carriage. "We need to be careful, of course."

"Of course, dear — but I'm sure they must have been all right — her manners show that."

We drove off, my mother sitting up very straight and nervous, as always, and cautioning me not to use the whip — while I, silently communing with myself, turned over in my mind the mysterious word *they*, and wondered whom she could have meant by it.

But mothers speak not of *theyes* to their small sons; what possible interest could sons have in such things as *theyes*? The very pronoun, by virtue of its mysteriously withheld meaning, belonged utterly to another world than mine. *They* — it took a rich and haughty quality unto itself, that cryptic, cabalistic word — I saw it dancing in large black capitals before my eyes, making agile patterns of itself upon the background of bright hills, unrolling itself unevenly past us in time to the unwhipped pony's lazy pace.

But sometime I should be old enough to have *theyes* of my own; and to whip ponies when I liked, and to puzzle small children as maddeningly as I pleased. I should delight in telling little boys to drive me to the station, and I should take many, many unexplainable trains. But meanwhile I would possess my own pronouns in silence, and when people who were larger than I wished to know all about them, I would sit up very straight, and gaze mysteriously out over any hills that might happen to be handy.

"Be a good boy now, and don't let your father forget his dinner," said my mother as we drew up before the station platform with a great rattling of loose spokes. Then she kissed my nearest cheek, took up her shiny handbag, and got down to buy her ticket.

I waited until the train came in, to wave her goodbye.

I watched the train bear her away, and then, feeling much older and taller, I got into the carriage and spoke to the pony in my own private way. He looked round to see if my mother's gentle figure was really gone, and then he began to go very fast indeed. We reached the house in a great deal of dust.

I was surprised to see my father lying under a tree with his pipe in his mouth, sending a thin blue cloud into the leaves. He sat up when he heard the rattling of the carriage spokes, and attempted to look busy and important and very old. Parents, I have found since, are uneasy at being discovered dreaming by their sons.

He was restless the whole morning. Only once did he become really impatient. It was when he heard me talking proudly to Camilla, in the barn, of what I knew. "Mother's gone to the city to find out all about your mother and father," I said to the mystified child, who was sitting on a pile of hay looking at me with her large dark eyes. "Mother said she guessed they were all right, but last night father said he wasn't so sure. He —"

It was then I heard a voice I was familiar with. The tone was familiar too. "You come out here!" said the Voice. I trembled. "Yes, sir," I whispered, and went.

He was very angry, though I could not see just why. He bent down until his face was next to mine, and he looked into my eyes very hard.

"I was bright, when I was your age," he said. "I knew something."

"Yes, sir," said I, from way down where I was.

I kept quiet the rest of that morning. To each of Camilla's speeches I answered sullenly, or said "Shh!"

For there was no telling, that day, where he was apt to be. He could not seem to remain satisfied anywhere. He would pick up a hoe and chop with it for a few minutes among the currant bushes, getting himself all heated up and tired, as he always did; then he would go into the house and lie down. But no sooner had I begun to feel like an important person, with the small orphan for background and the whole world to expand in, then he would come out, holding his pipe in his hand, or pulling his watch out to look at it again, and go nervously by. It did not take much room for me to contract in.

He seemed trying to keep away from Camilla: Yet his eyes were on her whenever I looked at his uneasy figure.

Dinner time came. He was in the peach or-

chard; but when I called to him, as my mother had told me, *not-to-forget-his-din-ner!* he only waved his arm fretfully and sat there, picking bark off a tree.

But Camilla and I were hungry. We went in to the neat and elaborate cold meal my mother had left all ready on the table, and I sat down.

"Isn't HE coming?" asked the small orphan, in her slightly breathless voice, which always made you think she was going to say something quite mysterious and wonderful. I was eating part of a salad, and for a moment I did not answer. Then I said "M-no, m' I guess not. Come on and sit down."

"HE looks *awful* hungry," she said, peeking into the orchard from a window. She teetered from one foot to the other restlessly, and then all of a sudden her small face got bright. "I know!" said Camilla. "I'll take my plate and HIS plate out there!"

"Here!" I said. "That's for me!"

But she was running, with the salad clutched tightly against her breast, one dish under each sharp elbow, and knives and forks in her hands.

She returned a few minutes later, stealthily. I looked up and saw her eyes on a platter half full of cold meat. "HE says I'm to take that," she said primly, and snatched it. She ran to the peach orchard.

I did not see her until an hour later; and I did not care to. I was exceedingly disgusted to become aware of her, when that hour had passed, seated upon the shoulder of my very happy and well fed father, making a triumphal tour of the whole farm.

At about seven o'clock, just when I was feeling relaxed and comfortable and was looking round for a piece of board I had figured out how to do something with, he suddenly came upon me in the woodshed and spoke before I was prepared. "Are you bright?" he said.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"What?" he cried sharply.

"No, sir," said I.

"Very well then," said my father in a pleased voice. "If that's the case I'll stay at home, and *you* harness up the pony and go to the station for your mother." And he went off, slapping his thigh.

You never saw that pony go so fast as he did to meet the 7:40 train that evening.

I had to wait almost a half hour. At last it came in roaring, with people's heads out all along

its black sides, and men on the steps ready to swing down. My mother was among the first to reach the platform. She walked straight toward the pony and me, without looking at us. Somehow she looked very strange. I could not tell what was wrong, but I was frightened.

"Hello, mama," I said.

But she hardly spoke to me. Holding her bag in her hands, she sat up very straight in the carriage, and looked at the road ahead. I did not dare make the pony go too fast, and yet until we should reach home and I could listen from somewhere I should not find out what was the matter. For when I asked her what she had been doing all day in the city, my gentle mother only answered, "Never mind."

"We all had supper, mama," I said.

With sluggishly clicking spokes we moved along; they did not rattle when she was in the carriage. The pony rested himself on the top of every hill, and walked maddeningly through the valleys. By the time we reached the house it was twilight, and my patience was hardly better than that of my parents. But I kept it.

He was waiting where the road turned into the farmyard. I had never realized how young my father really was; though most of the time he looked quite old. He waved his hand, and I stopped. He was saying something about Camilla, that he had put her to bed safe, and I don't think he had noticed anything wrong. "Is it all right?" he asked her—and then for the first time he seemed to notice the expression on her face, and I saw the joy all go out of him, and he seemed, in a strange way, to have grown smaller.

"Drive on to the barn," said my mother to me, and got down. I did, but slowly: I turned round and saw them standing there. My mother was talking very fast, and her face seemed to be flushed. But he was not speaking a word.

I unharnessed the pony as fast as I knew how, and threw his supper into the manger running. I saw them walking quickly into the house, and I followed. I knew they would go to the kitchen; and I thought I would get something to eat in the dining room. When I reached it, from the front part of the house, I pretended very quietly to be eating some bread I found on a dish, in case they should come out.

But they stayed in the kitchen for hours. I nibbled crumbs off that piece of bread, and stood very still, so that no board might creak, and sometimes when they spoke loud I could hear the

words they said. I could not understand very well, and I was afraid to remain there long. The room was dark: I could see the moon beginning to shine a little in the sky through the lilac leaves against the window. I listened. I heard my mother speaking in a strange voice full of anger, and she repeated some words which I did not understand several times. But I knew from the way she said them they must mean something shameful.

At first my father seemed to be arguing with her; but as she talked his voice gradually became less sure, and he stopped talking after a while.

I stood in the dining room until the sky was dark and the moon had risen above the lilac bush and was shining right in on me. Finally I tiptoed away through the parlor and into the hall. The lamp was lighted, shining softly a little way up the stairs. I waited a while, and then I went up very quietly.

Camilla's room was the small one at the back of the house. I saw that the door was open a little, and I went in.

I saw her bed by the window, for the moon was shining very brightly in here; and I heard the old windmill softly clanking as it turned in the yard outside. She must have been awake hearing it too, for she sat up when I came in.

She had on a white nightgown: I could make out her dark short hair and the shiny dark places that were her eyes. She looked very small, sitting up in that big bed.

I whispered to her: "They're talking about you."

The small white figure whispered back. "What did they say?" she said.

I have often marveled since at the unparalleled gentleness of small boys. "She says you'll have to go away," I whispered to that child, my face close to hers. "She says — she says that your mother was a bad woman."

I was startled at what happened then. I must have jumped at her fierce answer. "She's a liar! She's a liar!" came the tremulous whisper. "My mother was a good lady! My mother was a good lady . . . ."

I suppose I answered something. I had never heard this small orphan cry before. I was hideously afraid of hearing footsteps coming swiftly up the stairs.

"Go away!" Camilla was whispering over and over, through violent sobs. "Go away, go away, go away!"

So I tiptoed out of that room also, and listened like a criminal for sounds from below, and closed the door behind me so that they would not hear her crying.

When it grew late and still they did not come out of the kitchen; and the sounds from Camilla's room grew fainter, and finally ceased; and the whole house grew quiet; when I could not find any place for myself, and began to grow sleepy, I left my post on the top stair at last, and went to my room, and climbed into bed. I remember listening for a long while to the mournful rusty sounds of the windmill wheel, turning slowly at the back of the yard, opposite Camilla's window.

In the morning there was a quietness about the house I noticed the moment I waked up and looked at the square of sunlight on my bed. Downstairs seemed to be the strange center of that quiet; my mother was in the dining room attending to something, but my father was nowhere about. I looked for him in the stable, and I made a tour of the fields. When I came back to the house Camilla was eating her breakfast, and my mother was in the kitchen.

I did not want to be alone with Camilla. She was quiet and pale. I had forgotten how thin she was until that morning.

"Your father is ill, and is staying in bed," said my mother when I came into the kitchen. "Hurry and eat your breakfast, I have lots to do today."

I found in a little while that it was to mend and press some garments of Camilla's, and to pack her bag for her so that she would be ready to take the afternoon train.

How quiet the house was! The sound of my mother ironing filled it. I wandered about in the fields; I visited the animals in the barn; I found the board I had been looking for, and began to whittle at it; all the time I wondered why Camilla did not join me. But she was in her room all day, or sitting by the ironing board watching my mother get her clothes ready so that she could leave in time for the afternoon train, which would return her to the city and to the Home.

At lunch the three of us sat eating and looking past each other. My mother kept getting up to attend to things in the kitchen. She took a tray upstairs.

"Is it for HIM?" Camilla asked me in a whisper, after she had gone out.

When the time came to get ready my mother began to talk to the orphan. She told her she should go to church and lead an upright life, and

always do what the sisters told her to do, in the Home.

Camilla said, "Yes'm."

"You'd better harness the pony," said my mother. Camilla was dressed and ready, but she had not changed her housegown.

As I was backing the pony into the shafts I was startled to see my father come into the stable, wearing his best clothes. He helped me, without saying anything. When I was about to take the reins, he said: "No, you stay — I'm going to the station."

I watched from inside the stable while my mother brought out the bag and while my father helped Camilla climb into the carriage. She had on the white dress she had worn on the first day she had appeared in our dark hot parlor. It was autumn now.

"Come and say goodbye to Camilla!" my mother called. She was bending forward to kiss the little girl. She looked somehow very hard and firm. I had never seen her so before. Suddenly I saw the orphan draw back. "You said my mother was a bad woman!" she cried. She put her hand over her face.

"Camilla!" came my mother's voice, weak and startled.

"I won't kiss you, I won't ever kiss you!"

My mother face was flushed and strained. She stared at the child without moving, only she put her hand up to her throat.

"You're not *my* mother — my mother was a good lady, and I love her —"

"Camilla, my dear! I never said —"

"You did, you did, You said my mother was a bad woman! I heard you! You did!"

"Camilla, my child, I —"

It was then that my father muttered something to her which I could not hear. He whipped the pony, and the carriage rattled forward and out of the yard.

I stood half in and half out of the door, staring at the retreating figure of the small orphan in her white dress, seated beside my tall father in his best clothes; both of them veiled in the cloud of dust that rose swiftly after them to the sound of rattling spokes. Strange that I should notice, when she was so far away I could scarcely make out her features, that she had on the earrings that she had worn the first day she had come.

My father had made her stand up, and he was holding her, with one arm, against his shoulder while she waved to us. I saw the earrings plainly, for they flashed in the sun.

## AQUARELLE

By CHRISTINE TURNER CURTIS

It was a soaking January day. Edward, dawdling irresolutely at the front window, saw the bare trees strung with rows of clear waterdrops like necklaces of moonstones. Even a light footstep seemed to distract them, made the little globes elongate and swing precariously on the twigs, and a sudden stamp sent down a perfect shower of spray. The sky was fitful: sometimes a smart steady drum of rain; again the pelting world would subside and a thick drizzle choke the cave of the air. On the walks the slush, blue and stippled, took like wax the print of every passing foot.

With sudden decision, Edward turned into the hall closet for his raincoat.

"Not going out today, are you, dear?" said his mother, hovering near him, transparently casual. "I thought you said you were going to practice. Doesn't Miller's concert come off next week?"

Edward made no answer.

"Going up to Madge's?"

"I may." His head was half buried in his coat as he stuffed his "Amiel" into the lining, and made sure of his cigarettes.

"Better put on your goloshes; the walking's terrible." She stood watching him as with habitual perversity he scuffed into leaky rubbers.

"Please keep your feet dry, dear," her anxiety broke through her pride, "Remember you can't afford to get all stiffened up for Friday."

Stiffened up! He clenched his teeth. When in his life had he ever been stiffened up? Edward flung himself out the door in a seethe of irritation. As he splashed up the street, he was rigid in every muscle. Not until he had turned the corner, and was well out of sight of his mother's vigilant eye, did he draw a long relieved breath.

Free at last, by God. From his mother's prod-

dings and pryings, from the disgusting little flappers and their drummings (Edward was musical instructor in a girl's school) from musical societies and church choirs, from his pupils, his friends, Madge, everybody!

He crossed a field patched with white and entered a dripping little wood. He stood lighting a cigarette, letting the silence sink into his nerves. The boles of the pale beeches rose smoothly like smoked pearl in the mist; dead leaves, clinging to the boughs, seemed to float on the fog in clouds of pink and sulphur. He began to feel glowing within him, his own special affinity with the woods.

Skirting the hill, he saw the grasses wearing their sullen winter yellow; maize-colored above the mealy snow, they swished about his ankles. The pond came into sight then swathed in flying vapors — the pine grove was obscured in the rising condensation.

Soon he would see her house: he caught sight of it now,— tall, gray, gaunt, just this side of the big buttonwood. There was even a light in the upper story — her room. He tramped quickly into the grove and took his stand on a little promontory from which he could look across into her yard. The arches of the footbridge hung lace-like in the fog: on a distant clothesline swung a short yellow skirt.

Immediately she stood before him, like a watercolor on the mist — the elusive pastel of her face, with its mauve-blue eyes — her remembered face so much more satisfying to him than her actual features!

Edward seated himself on a stump. He felt so peaceful that for half a minute he thought he might even postpone the decision he must come to in regard to Madge. Better not, though,— better make up his mind about her once for all. Should he or should he not ask her to marry him? He took a deep puff on his cigarette, and let his mind drift back to the first time he had seen her.

The Miller's stuffy little parlor had been crowded — Miller, director of the church choir for which Edward was organist, had been trying out applicants for the Guild production of "The Holy City." Young people sat jammed together on sofas and chairs; groups of singers stood about giggling and gossiping. Mrs. Miller was trying desperately to marshall them into some semblance of order — sopranos, altos, basses, tenors. Edward sat at the piano, idly running over accompaniments. Miller himself was everywhere, in a velveteen jacket and soiled white vest — his

fine eyes flashing, his hair dangling weirdly over his collar.

An applicant would step forward, Edward would take his limp and dog-eared piece of music, set it up on the rack and start at once to play. Even if he had seen Madge, it is doubtful if he would have noticed her especially,— certainly not have recognized her as that little Mrs. Wilton, who had lost her husband in the spring. He took her song, which was almost in tatters, observed scornfully that it was Cadman's "At Dawning," a selection he had already played three times.

He began the prelude, and obediently her voice sprang to the note — mounting tremulously out of a slight huskiness. "When the dawn is in the sky,— I love you. . . ." In the intimate and tragic abandon of her tones, he seemed to divine instantly everything about her — her over-emotionalism, her "theatre," her hysteria, that extravagant enthusiasm she would throw into everything she loved, and lastly, something limpid and childlike in her nature — a quality of candor under the elaborate masquerade of her femininity.

After the song, he turned and looked at her. She had a small freesia-colored face, pointed, with a very faint dimple in the chin. In it shone eyes of a clear, aqueous blue — the blue of wild lilacs on the California hills. Her face was delicately modeled, as if some sculptor had laid his thumbs on the fine creamy clay and stroked in those sinuosities of the living flesh.

She had a flower-like way of standing, too, he noticed, of balancing like a freesia on its stalk, and casting her eyes a bit to the side, her lips lightly pursed and a kind of archness on her clear features.

Miller had unhesitatingly taken her for his soprano.

After that Edward had seen her twice a week at rehearsals, but he had not exchanged a dozen words with her until the Sunday they drove into Boston to hear "The Holy City." Miller was at the wheel, Madge sat between him and Mrs. Miller,— Edward with Carter and Miss Grange on the rear seat. Now and then he caught glimpses of Madge's blue eyes in the little car mirror. She knew he was watching her, but he could not help it.

God, she was beautiful,— to him she was fatally appealing. He did not really like her, he told himself — he saw through her too well for that. Yet he was constantly cudgeling his wits to

discover the secret of her charm. No brains, he decided, no sense of humor, she is eternally occupied with making an impression. Her strongest instinct is dramatic: she has a flair for converting a situation into a scene. The center of the stage and an audience — those were the two necessities of her existence.

He felt well pleased with himself for this diagnosis — and completely armoured in his penetration.

After the concert, the party had tea together in a tiny shoppe called the "Blue Owl." Edward sat rather awkwardly between Madge and Miller.

"How many lumps?" Madge had turned her dazzling blue gaze upon him, as she dangled the tongs gracefully in her slim hand.

"Two," he had replied in his driest voice.

She had leaned across him and put them lingeringly into his cup.

"I'm so glad you have a sweet tooth," she had said under her breath, smiling up at him.

Why in the name of all things holy should that senseless remark have set him on fire? Against his will he had felt a stab, a sudden flash of intimacy between them. He remembered the trip home, and how she had led him on to talk of music, and of his own compositions, of her blue eyes upon him in deference and admiration.

The next Sunday he had been detailed to call for her, to take her to a musical tea given by some of their friends. He had not allowed himself to realize how fervently he had anticipated this event until the hour came to start. Then he could have kicked himself for fuming over his hair and tie, and for a certain tremor in his hands as he sat down to go over a sonata.

When he stood at last before Madge's door, he was struck by one of those horrid premonitions vouchsafed to the supersensitive: the premonition that everything would somehow be *all wrong*. He had no more than glimpsed her face through the glass of the door, than he knew that his forewarning was true. She had on the wrong hat, a green thing that made her eyes seem faded, and her skin sallow. A species of hostility emanated from her: she ignored his conciliatory advances, replying to his questions in monosyllables. Edward began to feel a deep sense of guilt, yet he knew himself to be guiltless. It was his first experience with feminine unreason. Against his will, he was conscious of a line of savagery in his face, the ruthless obstinacy of a disagreeable child.

At the party he sat disconsolately pushed up against the window, staring out into a bleached field. A lovely fountain shaped elm sprayed in the next yard, clouds moved over, gray, blue, sometimes burnished on the inside like shells. In the room behind him someone was playing Cyril Scott. The cool intervals dropped, rippled, spread away like water shimmering. He saw her across the room, her animation quite regained, chatting coquettishly with Carter. The music played on; disillusion like a fine ash, falling, choking, settled about him.

Later she came and crowded herself onto the piano bench where he sat improvising. Nothing his mind could do could check in any way the ecstasy of her nearness. He felt her pressing against him, her warm little arm and shoulder. He loathed her — yet God in Heaven, how he suddenly and unaccountably adored her. Every cell implored him to take her in his arms,—to drink, to die of the morphia of her lilac eyes.

Yet from that moment he had felt he must steel himself against her. His mind, his taste did not allow himself to approve of her. He felt that he could never be certain of her sincerity — she had the sort of mind that delights in contradictions, in machinations, in effects. He distrusted her, and that insidious childish innocence of hers.

He had not counted on her being ill!

When he heard about it, he was sceptical, feeling her to be capable of just that gesture, of catching the gripe simply for the dramatic possibilities it could offer. He refused to credit her real illness. At last one day the telephone rang, and Madge's weak silky voice said that she wanted very much to see him.

He bought English violets in a ring of forget-me-nots with a yellow rose-bud in the center.

She had looked very frail in bed, very pitiful. When she saw him come in a smug little smile of gratification had dawned on her face. Her satiny hair, the color of pulled taffy, shone in fine narrow waves like the plaitings of a silk shirt. Her eyes seemed larger — they had a devouring quality that made his heart turn completely over. About her shoulders she wore a pink flannel jacket edged with swansdown; now and then it would slip back and the cream-whiteness of her neck, the curve of her underarm would gleam. She took the violets, snuggled her cheek into the pillow with a pleased purr like a contented cat. Her great eyes poured their crystal upon him.

To allay his confusion, he stared at a lavender

and green stripe on the wall paper, down which twined a garland of porky flowers. Over the dresser hung a tinted landscape. Facing them in a tortoise-shell frame sat a photograph of her late husband, a boyish, pale-faced youth with stand-up hair and a bow tie. He was aware of nothing else in the dim room except an elephant filled with purple bath salts.

She had asked him about rehearsals, and he had tried to tell her about the progress of "The Holy City." Now and then she could cough painfully, and at such moments, he was thrown into a turmoil, despite the fact that he seemed to detect her especial "theatre" in that exhaustion, that faint voice, that hoarse and difficult breathing.

How that evening had unmanned him! After he left he walked for hours under the trees; he saw nothing on earth but her face, ravaged, with dark circles under the eyes. . . .

The fog was deepening — already street lamps on the bridge blurred into the moisture their muffled heads of pearl. The span of the bridge had dissolved into the dusk.

Edward sat immured in a cocoon of night. A deep and horrid depression settled upon him. He saw no escape. He realized that he should not marry Madge: they were thoroughly unsuited. She needed someone to look after her, but let another assume that responsibility! He felt that he would never be sure of her; for that insecurity he would have to pay the lifelong price of his freedom. He would have continually to descend from a stand of reason; he must resign forever the sense of himself as a full man. He could not do it.

Edward bowed his head on his hands.

Suddenly he heard footsteps plopping through the slush, the sound of a bough crackling.

He turned.

He saw Madge in her gray fur coat and snug gray toque, with the bright sickles of hair on her cheeks. She was all a nebulosity in the smudge of half-light; only her eyes seemed to stream toward him with their unnatural clarity. In high-heeled slippers and silk stockings she was picking her way down the slippery path.

"Hello, Edward," smiling with a touch of bravado, she greeted him.

Edward seethed with a sudden uncontrollable anger.

"In God's name, Madge, whatever made you come out on such a day? You crazy little fool, haven't you a grain of sense?"

Edward felt that he would choke her in a minute, he was beside himself with rage.

"You little idiot, you'll catch your death of cold."

"So will you, for that matter, Edward, sitting on that soaking stump. I saw you hours ago."

Edward felt a cold sweat break out all over him. "Hell and damnation."

Madge came closer to him — he felt the soft fur of her coat against his arm, every separate hair charged with an incredible electric current. He took her roughly by the shoulder.

She put back her head, looking up at him out of her amazing eyes. Her scrutiny was appealing, roguish, yet inexplicably knowing.

Edward groaned.

He knew himself to be beaten, trapped, completely and ignominiously vanquished. For the moment he was too angry to care.

Madge put up a small finger and poked his cheek.

"Come along, silly, let's have some tea."

On her face was the *look*, inexpressibly arch and demure, and again she sank her wicked chin into a rim of triumphant fur.

## THIRD MONTH, EIGHTEENTH DAY

By HANIEL LONG

Third month, eighteenth day, came the robins, came the pussy-willows, came your letter.  
 That day the little boys plugged the sugar maples where the brook flows from the glen;  
 That day the brook ran clear and pure, was a light green in the sun.  
 I transplanted a willow yellow as gold from one side of the brook to the other.  
 I kept crossing and re-crossing the brook all day — I couldn't stay away from it:  
 Third month, eighteenth day, and I had a letter from you.

# OH, THAT I HAD GILLS LIKE A FISH!

By ERNESTINE M. SONGER

If this paper bears the irreparable birth-marks of dangling participles, split infinitives and other loose ends of disturbed thinking, my theme is proved.

I am sitting in the dim, secluded lobby of a small hotel. Business snoozes through the late afternoon, and the only other customer is taking his siesta. We present a languid picture of comfort and quietude reminiscent of Washington Irving's favorite haunts. But unfortunately the picture is with sound. From some hidden vault leaps the strident voice of a man who, in lusty falsetto, complains of the weather, love, and other lugubrious details of spring.

I try to concentrate, to ignore him. I pull my hat over my ears, but it is useless. My serenity of mind lies shattered at the feet of this man whom nothing can deter from yawning out loud in public and to the accompaniment of an energetic orchestra. I am vanquished before such a one.

Snatching up pen and paper, I dash to find quiet elsewhere. I hasten to the new union building erected on the old campus for the comfort of itinerant alumnae.

A cool breath, as if from an Italian cloister, greets my entrance. Renaissance splendor mingled with modern comfort meets my eyes; I approach a luxurious chair drawn before a massive desk. But alas! Alack! A familiar shriek and sputter comes charging through the arches. It is unmistakable. A radio is going full blast and is ingeniously set between two stations to give a variety of programs. Before it doze two under-graduates, those marvels of present day development, who live upon, thrive upon and slumber through these bellicose outbursts.

With tears in my eyes, I look at the luxurious chairs around me. The room is like a magic cavern; were I to sit in any chair expecting to sail forth on pleasant seas of thought, I should immediately find myself hurled — like Alice down the rabbit hole — into chaos. No amount of wishing can stop the device; so I leave the building.

As I walk along the street, this same squawking jumps at me from every house and shop. It is an epidemic, a plague.

Thus I ponder the nation-wide tragedy which threatens us, and long for a crusade before it is too late. My ink is pale, but I wish those florid orators who can reduce audiences to lacrimation with their word pictures of the extinct buffalo, "the symbol of our country," and the passenger pigeon, "that blithe spirit," would leave those sentimental subjects to the peace of their graves and turn to this new and vital theme, the passing of quiet places.

One by one the quiet places are slipping into history. They are being devoured by the genius of modern invention that aims to leave no spot untouched by noisy progress.

Formerly, one could slip into a motion picture theatre for a half-hour of relaxation and slumber in its dark and restful cave. If it were summer and the picture nicely sentimental, one could cool his toes and float away on the strains of "A Kiss in the Dark" or the "Merry Widow Waltz." But now even the bread advertisements in the smallest theaters are accompanied by suitable sounds, the bustle of yeast rising and falling as seems appropriate.

No camping or fishing trip in virgin woods is considered complete without a portable machine to keep some of the horrors of civilization in the air.

I recently met a young girl on a Pullman. In the afternoon she pulled out her victrola — in true Sadie Thompson fashion — and released its husky, jazz voice. She was going home for only a week, but "I can't live without it" was her comment. Is there an endowed organization of these young things working in secret to rid the country of all peaceful places wherein old codgers, like me, may creep periodically? I am beginning to suspect.

I do not wish to stress unduly the idea of silence for thought, because thinking is a pursuit in which I do not over-indulge. Thinking has its place, but sitting quiet in a vacant mood presents a joy which only those who know the art can appreciate. It is in such moments that some of the greater adventures of life are experienced. I recommend lying in the spring sunshine gazing at a pear tree in its frail bridal dress — and with no sound effects.

I do not know what can be done about the passing of quiet places. It is a problem for minds less often vacant than mine. Perchance some of the wizards of modern science will step forth. I have considered entomologists who are skilled at finding an insect that eats the insect that is destroying something we want. These men may be able to find an insect to consume noise, thus leaving all places tranquil. Or, better for divers tastes, they may map off the country in ten mile checks, one with and one without modern sounds.

Many times I have cried with the poet, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." But wings no longer appeal to me. The atmosphere has ceased to be untroubled.

No matter how ethereal or divine a creature I might be, I cannot imagine a state of tranquillity existing in our present heavens. Though this conception may be slightly unscientific, it is none the less vivid to me: after one evening spent in the trafficways of airplanes, static, wireless waves and all their busy cousins, I picture myself at dawn as something simulating a fine colander or discarded target. No, the sky is not the place of peace I crave.

It seems to me that the only remaining possibility is the sea. So I change my chant and sing, "Oh, that I had gills like a fish! for then would I swim away and be at rest." I desire to be no leader among fish but a small fish with no social distinction. And I should swim deep.

## PILGRIMAGE INLAND

By ROBERT TALLMAN

This is the tale of how after the wind fell  
 And the tide ebbed, we who were in that beach climbed  
 Out of the cove over the sandstone boulders  
 And stood on the sandstone heap and saw at the tide's ebb  
 The barnacled boulders naked in the sunwind caked  
 With the sea's own salt.

Three days we followed a dry  
 Creekbed grown with brown grass and in that time  
 Saw no water.

Then the grass grew wiry and taller,  
 Mudholes crowded with gnats and by nightfall the swamp  
 Was upon us and still there was no clear water on the land;  
 The swamplife reeked about us and one found  
 A solid grassplot and there built a fire; and the insects  
 Swarmed and the swamp roared in our ears  
 And always the lapping of water far off and remote  
 As Arcturus throbbed in our heads.

Next morning we found  
 A dead rat putrid by a rotting stump and mud  
 In its open mouth; and bats slept in the lowbranched trees  
 And spiderwebs brushed at our faces in passing; there  
 Was no clean thing.

We came out barefoot and naked  
 And torn from the swamp on another day.

In the center  
 Of a common, surrounded by short grass, there was a spring

Deep as the earth and cold as the crystal floors of heaven;  
And there we drank first and bathed then and dived;  
And one man drowned.

And that night by the fire we were silent  
And the moon came up and sounds of voices came up  
Over a knoll and holloweyed palefaced people  
Appeared and approached and one came forward touching  
His forehead and smiling from a mouth familiar:  
Then one by one the wanfaced people slipped from their clothes  
And slid into the spring not forty yards distant. . . .

This is the tale of the ascent and the pilgrimage inland  
Long ago and in the dark last morning of the tale we found  
No clothes on the springbank, no man in the water;  
We turned our faces toward the mountains and the distant snow,  
The clouds brooded and gathered and fell low,  
And autumn ended and the winter rains set in.

## LITTLE GIRL GROWING

By ESTHER SHULTZ

Ann, a tow-headed little girl five years old, took a flying jump across the creek which rippled amiably through her father's forty-acre pasture. On the whole prairie, which reached in a bright geometrical design across six miles towards the misty timber, Ann was the only thing that moved. The late-summer day had been hot, and the earth still brooded beneath the sultry sky.

Ann turned and marked with a stick the sunken impress where her heel had struck the soft earth. She could jump much farther now than in the early summer when she had first started to bring in the cows at milking time — almost a foot farther. She almost never landed in the stream now. It would not have made any difference, except to brighten up her dusty little feet.

She did not go directly for the cows. Ann knew a secret. Always it had to be contemplated, with thrills of enjoyment, before she could attend to proper business. Quietly she slipped down stream. There, where the banks were steepest, a family of muskrats lived.

No one can associate with the animals of the stream except by maintaining a well-bred silence. Animals have no patience with familiarity. Ann, therefore, respected their privacy, and never came too closely to the den in the bank, but stopped at the willow tree.

From beneath its swinging wands she could see

the intent black eyes watching her, crouching behind the ancient trunk. For a time they merely watched — those black eyes and her blue ones. She saw the indiscreet tumblings of the young muskrats. She watched the fat old one creep to the edge of the stream, drop into the water, and float away like a dark shadow beneath the ripples that slipped between the banks where tall grasses grew. But the great sun, drooping so wearily, warned her that she could not wait.

The cows, six dozing Jerseys, stood in the shade of a tall green hedge on the opposite side of the pasture. With a stick in her hand, Ann ran, making little jumps over the entangling weeds. She ordered her charges commandingly, for such a little girl, awakening them from such dreams as cows have.

Prodding a slow flank here and there, Ann urged them homeward. But only so fast can a cow walk and no faster. Ann relaxed to their stiff pace, and thought of other things as she dragged her stick behind her or switched the head of a ripe red clover.

The slow way home was a time for feeling, and Ann let loose her thoughts. Her dreaming flowed toward the broad reaches of the prairie. It touched the whole scene. The earth responded. The grasses, bending as the breeze stole over them, recognized her. There was no strangeness

in the clouds. The sun was close. She did not touch it, but she could have, as its final arc drooped behind the palisades of the timber. The earth was hers. It was beautiful, and Ann's heart was sweet and happy.

The evening dimmed, and two crows beat their slow way across the quiet twilight. Ann splashed back across the stream behind the cows, and followed them up the hill through the gate.

Her work done, she went into the kitchen, lighted by the yellow glow of a kerosene lamp, where her mother stirred steaming things on the stove. Ann's father came in for the milk pails. He was grumbling and cross. Ann kept quiet.

"Here it is sun down, and the chores ain't done yet," complained her father. "Always have to be workin' yourself to death."

"All you got to do now is the milkin'," encouraged Ann's mother. "'Twon't take you long."

"A farm ain't no place for a decent man to live. You work like a dog and you never get nowhere. You don't ever have nothing. It ain't a fit place for a decent man."

The screen door slammed. Ann's mother sighed and stirred the potatoes. Ann wondered. She wished that she could show her father the things that she had seen. But she couldn't.

## LITERATURE WITH ROOTS

FRANK LUTHER MOTT

Occasionally a sharp gust of debate blows up out of that old storm center, the legitimacy of regionalism in literature. It is a good old controversy, but it is based primarily upon misunderstandings, slight divergencies in points of view, and minor differences in the critical evaluations of certain books. I doubt if there is much fundamental clash of opinion.

The regionalist, for example, can assent to the bulk of the doctrine that is preached at him so consistently and, alas, often with so much condescension.

He, too, believes that literature is not the creature of geography or race. Certainly few of the partisans of regional literature in America are adherents of the old Taine application of biologic determinism to letters.

He, too, recognizes that regionalism is, in one sense at least, narrowing, though he sees in it a depth that is often more than compensatory; and, being a believer in the doctrine of the microcosm, he sees a little space of earth encompassing a great reach of life, as Emerson saw the whole world globed in a dewdrop.

He, too, knows that no small part of the work done in the name of regionalism and "local color" is superficial and unworthy.

He, too, understands that limitations of locality may easily lend themselves to the major sin of critical logrolling. Not being altogether blind, he cannot but see that evil practice flourishing both in and out of circles that are committed to regionalism. But he knows that no critic worth

his salt is merely the agent of a neighborhood mutual admiration society.

But this is not all. The believer in American regionalism feels deeply the importance of certain facts and principles which many others are fain to overlook or forget. He is, for example, tremendously impressed with the variety of the American scene. He may even argue that one of the few distinctive characteristics that unite to make American literature American is the variety which comes from differences ethnological, climatological, topographic — in short, from the scope of our land and people. And he will maintain that these differences are precious as art materials, and not to be rejected because of a lack of conformity to any one taste or critical measuring rule. The reason that they are precious is that they are genuine, sprung from the deep experience of the folk, worked out of much life.

There is much scurrying about the country in automobiles these days, and much accumulation of superficial ideas. The sophistication which is the goal of this kind of life is precisely the opposite of that true culture whose roots go deep into tradition and the ancient handiworks and the life of the race. These things root and grow in places. There is a kind of integrity of an old man who belongs to a certain environment and nowhere else that is not found in the cosmopolite who bears a dozen veneers one imposed on another: one feels that the old man with roots is more perfect and complete. And it is because of this integrity and perfection that all the materials belonging to un-

spoiled places in the United States are of the highest value for painting, sculpture, poetry, fiction, and all of the more fundamental arts.

Your true regionalist has a passion for whatever is indigenous. This is not due to a preoccupation with geography; it is less an interest in place than in people who belong to place. Neither is it mystical, basing itself on a Wordsworthian feeling of man's kinship with inanimate Nature. Of course, both these factors may be related to what I have called the passion for the indigenous; but primarily this devotion is based upon a belief in the honesty and worth of whatever is perfectly assimilated to its environment — simply because it is honest and not cheap, lying, or factitious. One knows that the Santa Clara pottery is honest — every line of it and the idea back of every piece. It is honest because it actually does represent a group of people and the religion, customs and ideals that have generated through the mellowing years in the valleys and on the mesas overlooked by the Jemez Mountains. To take another example, one knows that Sterling Brown's blues songs are real, for they represent the actual life and aspirations and tragedies of folk along the lower Mississippi, singing of flood dangers, chopping cotton, the boll weevil, steamboating —

Water, water, more than I've ever seen;  
The water is still rising from Memphis to New  
Orlean'.

Or take Miss Suckow's Kaetterhenrys. They have not lived on Turkey Creek for unnumbered generations, to be sure; but that they are thoroughly assimilated to the region nobody can doubt for a minute — and that very fact gives them an integrity which is in itself a kind of rough-hewn beauty.

And finally the regionalist is more than likely to remind you that the history of American literature is, in the main, a tissue of regional movements. This has been inevitable in view of that variety and scope of our country which has been mentioned — that *e-pluribus-unum-ness* which is so characteristically American. From Captain Smith's *True Relation* as written by campfires of the James River, devoted to description of the Virgin Queen's new dominion, and Mather's *Magnalia*, rooted in New England as deeply as ever a book was rooted, we find all the older writers more or less strictly wedded to place. Crèvecoeur, Frenneau, and Brockden Brown come natur-

ally to mind. Or if American literature began with Irving, as some persist in saying, it assuredly began on the banks of the Hudson River. Then came a great New England movement — not New England because those who contributed to it happened to be writing within a few hours' drive by one-hoss-shay of the Bunker Hill Monument, but because they wrote from, by and of New England. Hawthorne, for example was thoroughly a regionalist in all his work except that which was ill inspired by his visit abroad late in life. But there were also other regional movements — Southern, by Longstreet, Baldwin, and others; Western, by Judge Hall, Davy Crockett, and Mrs. Kirkland. Then came a later and more realistic New England school heralded by certain work of Mrs. Stowe and Rose Terry, and then a later Southern movement led by George W. Cable, George Egbert Craddock and Joel Chandler Harris. And so on: the half century since that Southern outburst has been full of regional developments.

We must, of course, remember that the best of these writers and writings were universal as well as regional; indeed, they were universal largely because they were regional. That very use of honest, indigenous materials which connects them forever with specific regions gave to their work the universality of appeal which a microcosm has for the world. There is no possible conflict between good regionalism and universality in art.

And now this article, which was intended to be a review of Professor Botkin's three annual volumes of *Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany*\*, has quite run away with me and become a tract on regionalism. This is not so wide of the mark after all, however, since these volumes themselves constitute a strong document in support of the principles I have been arguing for. In the second volume especially are found excellent little essays on the subject of regionalism by Mary Austin, Frank Dobie, Henry Smith, and others; and Professor Botkin's own introductory essay to the first volume is a most interesting contribution to the discussion.

This first volume, now unfortunately out of print, was issued in paper covers as a publication of the Oklahoma Folk-Lore Society. It was the first book printed by the University of Oklahoma Press. Professor Botkin's idea was to turn re-

\*Botkin, B. A., Editor: *Folk-Say, A Regional Miscellany*. 3 vols., 1929, 1930, 1931. Vol I published at Norman by the Oklahoma Folk-Lore Society; Vols. II-III published at Norman by the University of Oklahoma Press.

gionalism away from mere local color, which often tends to superficiality of observation and feeling, to something deeper and more ancient — something based upon tradition and folklore. Believing profoundly in "the natural poetry of legend and superstition" as a basis for art, he thought to gather some of these materials together in print, not only in order to save them while they could yet be saved, but also in order to stimulate interest in the artistic possibilities of all such half-buried treasure.

Wisely, then, Professor Botkin allowed his contributors great leeway. Some sent material in a comparatively crude state; others worked theirs up in tales or poems. In that first collection were a number of Indian fables taken directly from the mouths of those who had received them from their own ancestors, and with them an article on collecting such material, with bibliography. Then there were a collection of Paul Bunyan stories from the pipe-line workers, two articles on the old singing-school and old songs, a dissertation on animals and plants in Oklahoma folk-cures, some Oklahoma poems by Lynn Riggs and Leo Turner, some treasure legends by J. Frank Dobie, and some extremely effective Oklahoma local color sketches by George Milburn. Most of the book was related to New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. It was greeted with unexpected fervor and favor by critics.

The second volume, then, was twice as large, cloth-bound, and much wider in geographical scope. In it old-timers like Ross McLaury and Frank Neff touch elbows with the younger littérateurs like Philip Stevenson, Paul Horgan, and Langston Hughes. Here the critical department is strong, far more space being given to discussions by Barrett Clark, Mary Austin, Alain Locke, Louise Pound, and such savants than is given to criticism in either of the other volumes. The South and Southwest are still predominant. Outstanding are Neff's tall tales of the wind, Sterling Brown's article on blues songs, and the section on the old-time dances. This volume is particularly rich in notes, bibliographies, and scholarly apparatus.

In the third volume criticism has been omitted, and the book is devoted to the materials themselves, which are more widely distributed than ever. I suppose we may accept this as the policy of the series henceforth. After all, it is better to let the folk have their say in these volumes; the critics may have theirs in other places. Rich in-

deed are two collections in this volume, one of snake stories and one of witch tales, though every page is crowded with good stuff.

Professor Botkin has performed a real service in this series, both for literature and for folklore. He has turned the spotlight on significant kinds of material. He has spoken for regionalism of a profoundly important kind, has given others a forum to speak for it, and, best of all, has offered us three annual storehouses of samples of it. That these volumes will continue to be issued year after year is my earnest hope. Readers of THE MIDLAND should all be interested in them, for they will find there the same emphasis upon honesty and significance of life experience that has always been the very god of THE MIDLAND's idolatry. Moreover, many MIDLAND readers may be interested in gathering and preparing material for Mr. Botkin's anthology, and thus contributing to what is assuredly one of the most admirable ventures in recent publishing.

## BIOGRAPHICAL

Most of the contributors to this issue are already known to readers of THE MIDLAND. BENJAMIN APPEL was represented in our last issue of 1931 by the story *Rabbit*; he is a young writer, living in New York. ARTHUR SHUMWAY'S story *Larry Wade* will be remembered from THE MIDLAND of June 1931. He is engaged in journalistic work at Evanston. REV. LEO L. WARD is a teacher of English at the University of Notre Dame. His story from our issue of July, 1930, *The Threshing Ring*, is included in Edward J. O'Briens's *Best Short Stories of 1931*. A. E. FISHER lives in Pittsburgh and is the author of two novels, *To The Sun* and *Marriage in Blue*. HANIEL LONG has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND, of both prose and verse, for nearly ten years. He is living at Santa Fe.

*Aquarelle* is the first story by CHRISTINE TURNER CURTIS to appear in a magazine, though she has published articles and poems and a short book of fiction, *Amarilis*. Her home is in New England. ERNESTINE SONGER lives in Kansas City. ROBERT TALLMAN is a young Missourian now living at Colorado Springs. ESTHER SHULTZ is in newspaper work in Chicago.

---

### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

as required by law

of THE MIDLAND, published bimonthly at Iowa City, Iowa, for April 1, 1932.

Publisher, editor, and owner, John T. Frederick, 801 Monadnock Building, Chicago, Illinois.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16th day of April, 1932.  
K. HELEN MALLORY, Notary Public.

